



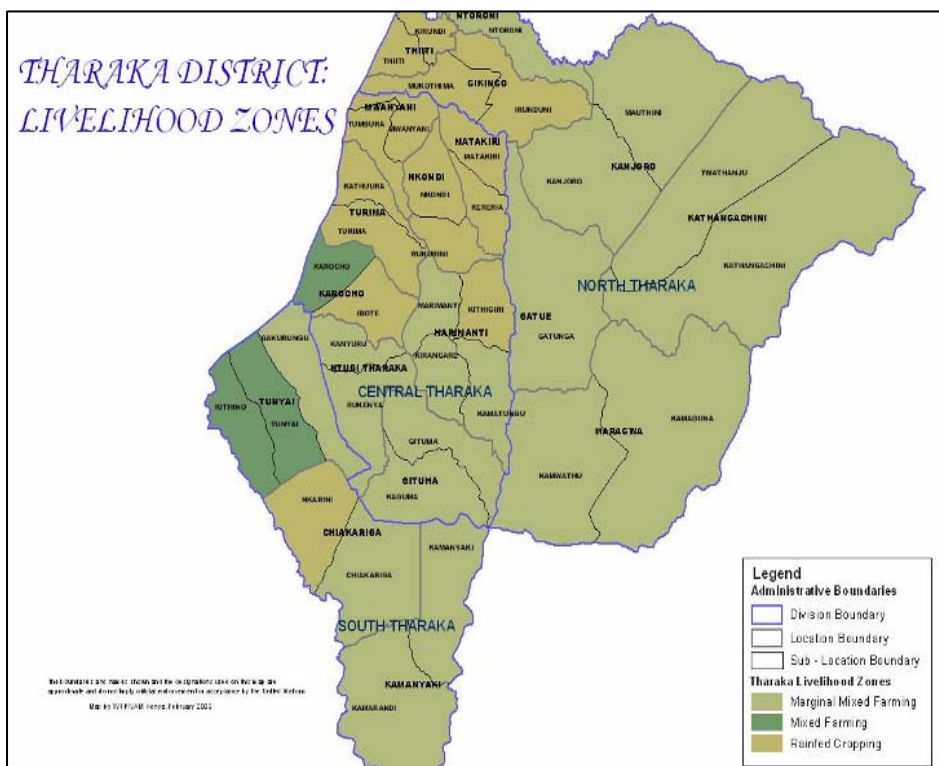
OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

**MINISTRY OF STATE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NORTHERN KENYA AND OTHER ARID LANDS
ARID LANDS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROJECT II**

DROUGHT MONITORING BULLETIN, NOVEMBER 2009

Tharaka North and South Districts

Warning Stages



Livelihood Zone	Warning stage	Trend
Marginal Mixed farming	Alert	Improving
Mixed farming	Alert	Improving
Rain fed cropping	Alert	Improving
District	Alert	Improving

Seasonal calendar

Short rains			Short dry spell		Long rains			Long dry spell			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planting/weed & pest control Milk yields increase Low HH food stocks 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short rains harvest Reduced milk yields Increased HH food stocks 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planting/weeding High calving rate Milk yields increase 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long rains harvest /Land preparation Increased HH food stocks High kidding rate(Sept) 			
Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept

Situation overview

- November is normally a wet month and was characterised by six wet days on average. Showers were received in most parts of the districts in the first four days of the month after which a dry spell of three weeks followed. As a result, the young crop suffered moisture stress, and this may depress the yields.
- Crop was generally at flowering stage. Rainfall pattern was uniform in the entire district. Field pests and weed control were the predominant activities in the month.
- There was adequate forage in all livelihood zones, though quite succulent following recent rains.
- There was a notable improvement in water situation in the larger Tharaka district as seasonal springs and streams flowed with water.
- Food security at household level remained at stake, with households' basically purchasing food at abnormally high prices.
- Peace was restored at the disputed boundary region of Tharaka and Meru north districts. The district peace committee was trained and it is expected to spearhead conflict resolution and peace restoration talks in the area.
- The nutrition status of children 12-59 months improved in the month. The percentage of children at risk of malnutrition improved from 9.6% recorded last month to 8.5%.

Current interventions

- 1) Protracted relief and recovery operation by WFP through the lead agency in Tharaka north and Tharaka south districts.
- 2) Gok relief food was also distributed to target beneficiaries in Tharaka north and Tharaka south districts.
- 3) The government has provided twenty one plastic water storage tanks (10,000 lts) as a drought mitigation measure in Tharaka districts. The ministry of water has ordered for nine tanks of similar capacity for the two districts.
- 4) Malaria campaign by the ministry of health. Bed nets were issued to children and mothers, the most vulnerable category.

1.0 Environmental indicators (Stability)

1.1 Rainfall

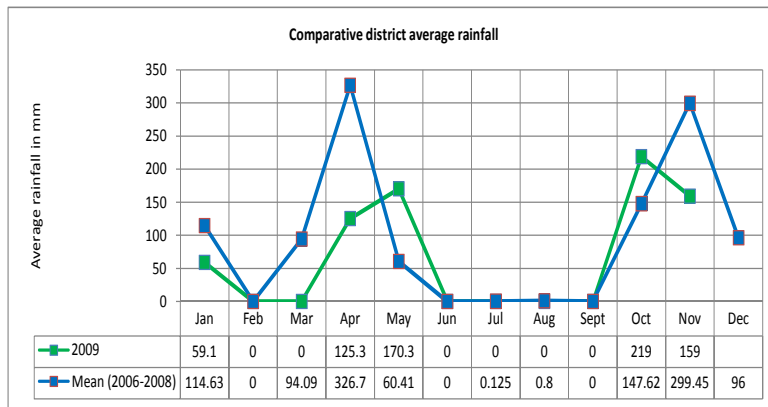


Figure 1. Source: ALRMP II

- The October-December short rains commenced normally in October and the amounts received in the first two weeks were adequate and there was good crop germination in all the livelihood zones. Majority of the farmers had planted before the rains.
- In the second week of the month, no rains were received in the two districts. This lasted three weeks, thereby stressing the young crop. As a result crops such as beans and maize wilted in parts of Tunyai. Rains resumed in the fourth week of November.
- Although good rains were received in October, the amounts received in the month of November were much below the long term mean for years 2006-2008 similar period. There are prospects of good crop performance in the season, should the rains progress well.
- Crop was generally at flowering stage. The predominant agricultural activity in the month was field pest and weed control.

1.2 Condition of natural vegetation and pasture

- There was adequate forage in all the livelihood zones, though quite succulent. Browse was plenty and livestock grazed within their normal grazing areas. There were neither livestock migrations nor conflicts related to forage reported in month. The available forage is likely to last until the next rains in March 2010.

1.3 Water sources and accessibility

1.3.1 Water sources

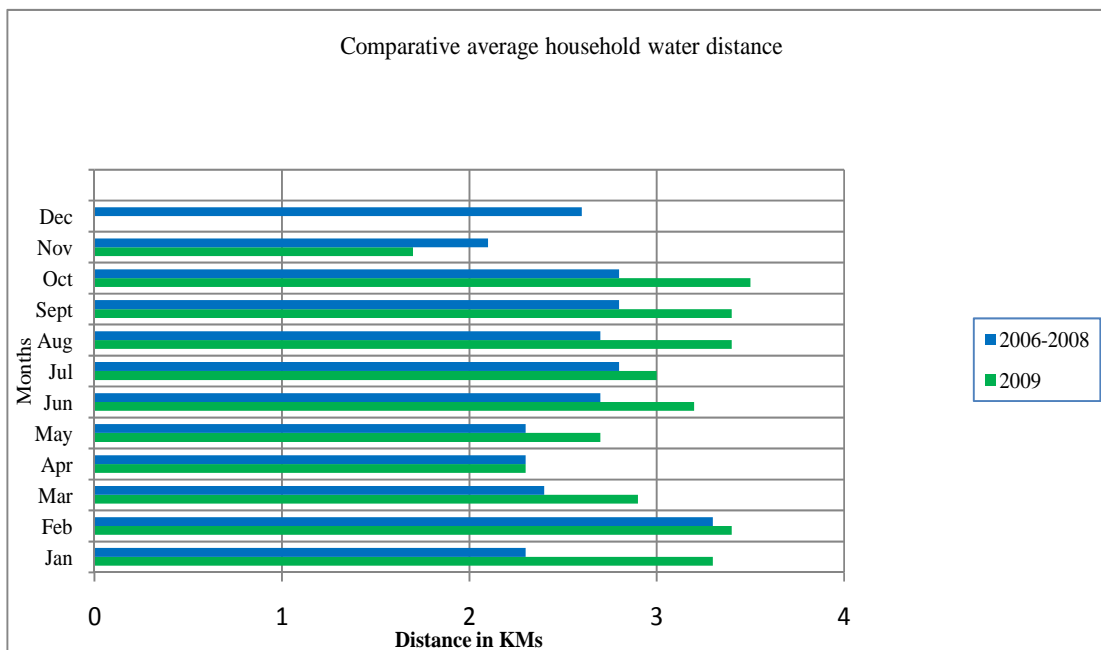


Figure 2 N= 30 sentinel sites

- There was notable improvement in water situation in the larger Tharaka region following heavy rains in the last week of the month. Seasonal streams and springs flowed with water and therefore shortened distance to water sources for both domestic as well as livestock use.
- The return distance for households was 1.7 kilometers, an improvement from 3.5 kilometers recorded last month. There were high water volumes in rivers and the water was generally turbid due to surface runoff.

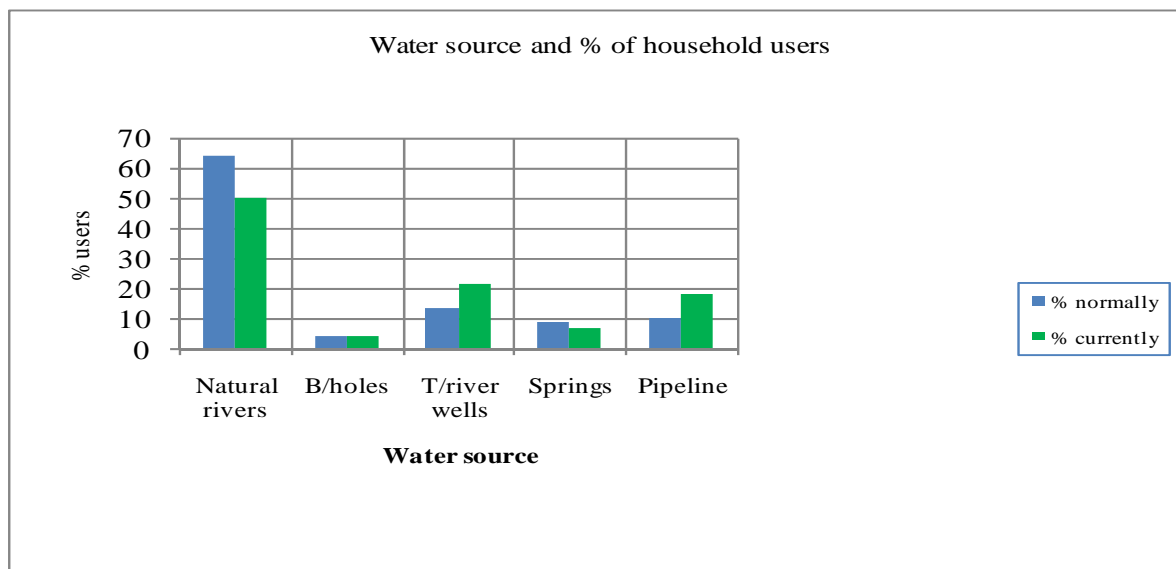


Figure 3 N= 300 households

- Figure 3 above shows various water sources in Tharaka north and Tharaka south districts and the percentage of household users in the month of November. Permanent rivers were the most utilised source of water and boreholes the least utilised compared to normal. A higher percentage of households utilised traditional river wells and pipeline water than normal while less number of people utilised natural rivers and springs in the month under review. During the rainy days, households utilised roof harvested rain water for domestic use. The water pans have yielded adequate water to last three months. These were normal observations in the month.

2.0 Rural economy indicators (Food availability)

2.1 Livestock production

2.1.1 Livestock body condition and health

General body condition for all livestock species was good. Livestock health was also fairly good as there was adequate forage for both browsers as well as herders.

2.1.2 Milk production and consumption

Milk production improved as a result of increased forage and water situation in all livelihood zones. The price of milk remained constant though at Ksh50 per litre in the urban centers and Ksh28 in the rural areas. Out of the 193 bottles of milk produced among the sampled population (300 hh), 70% of it was consumed at household level while only 30 % was sold.

3.0 Access to food

3.1 Livestock marketing

3.1.1 Cattle prices

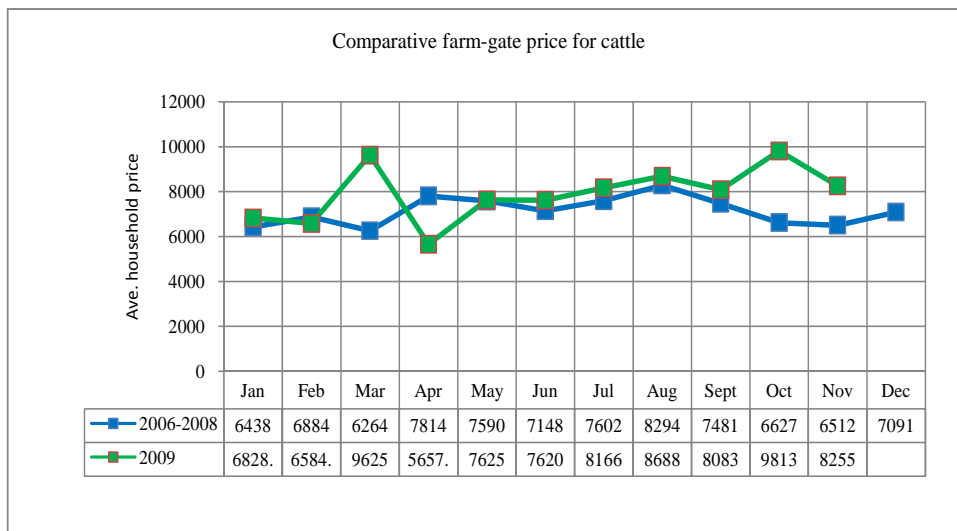


Figure 4 N= 300 households

The average price of cattle decreased from Ksh9813 to Ksh8255 in the month. Rains were ongoing and forage adequate. Body condition and health for cattle improved. The price decrease was normal and may be attributed to low cattle sales in the month. In comparison to the average price for years 2006-2008, the price was much higher but within seasonal range. These observations are normal for this time of the year.

3.1.2 Goat prices

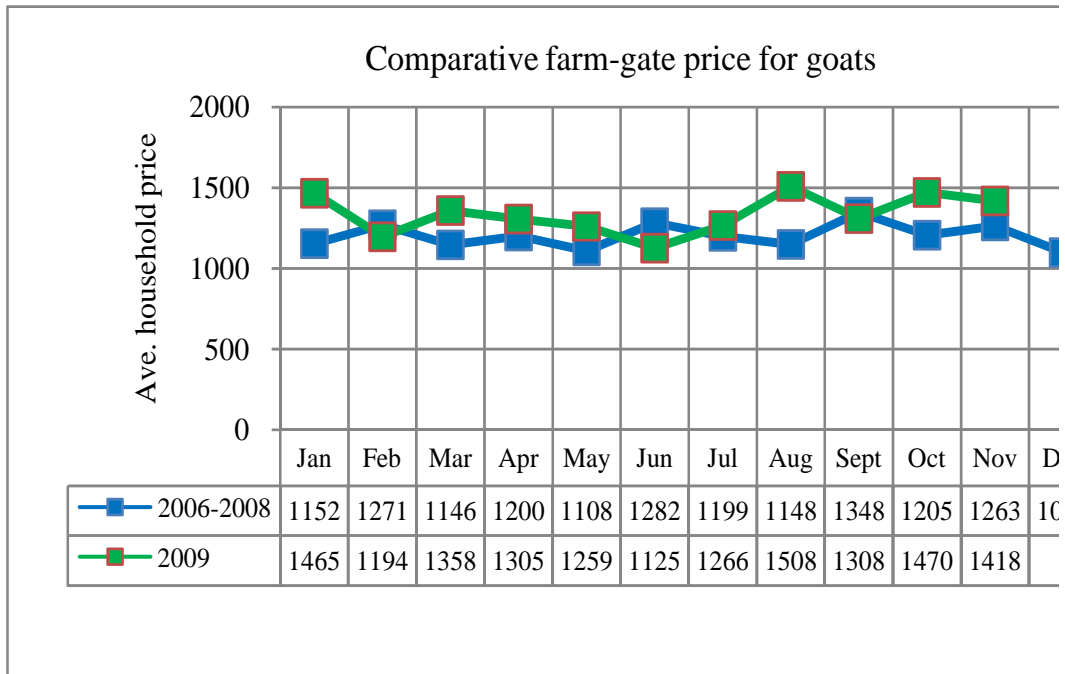


Figure 5 N= 300 households

The average price of goats decreased from Ksh1470 recorded in October to Ksh1418 in the month under review. The price was, however, above the long term mean for years 2006-2008 for a similar period. With the forthcoming December festivities, demand for goats was high, and supply also high in the markets. The price was therefore unlikely to reduce, despite high influx of the stock in the markets. Competition was high at the market, with new traders joining the trade that is becoming more lucrative due to prospected festivities. The observations made are normal for this time of the year.

3.2 Crop prices

Crop prices remained high and above seasonal norm. Both pulses and cereals were however readily available in the markets. Over 80% of the market stock was outsourced, since crop failed in three consecutive seasons.

3.2.1 Maize prices

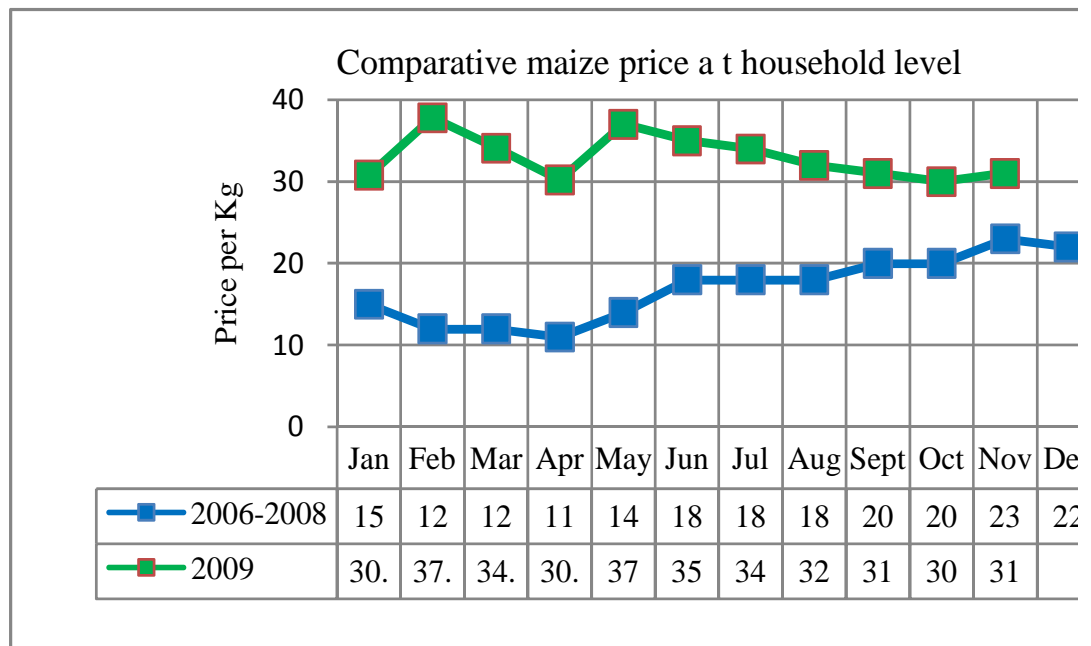


Figure 7 N= 300 households

Figure 7 above shows comparative maize price trend in the last 12 months. A higher average price for maize was maintained in the year 2009, compared to long term mean for years 2006-2008. In the month under review, the average price of maize was Ksh31 per kilo, having increased from Ksh30 recorded in the month of October. These prices were abnormally high, and almost unaffordable to the majority poor who currently depend on market purchases for daily household consumption.

3.2.2 Beans prices

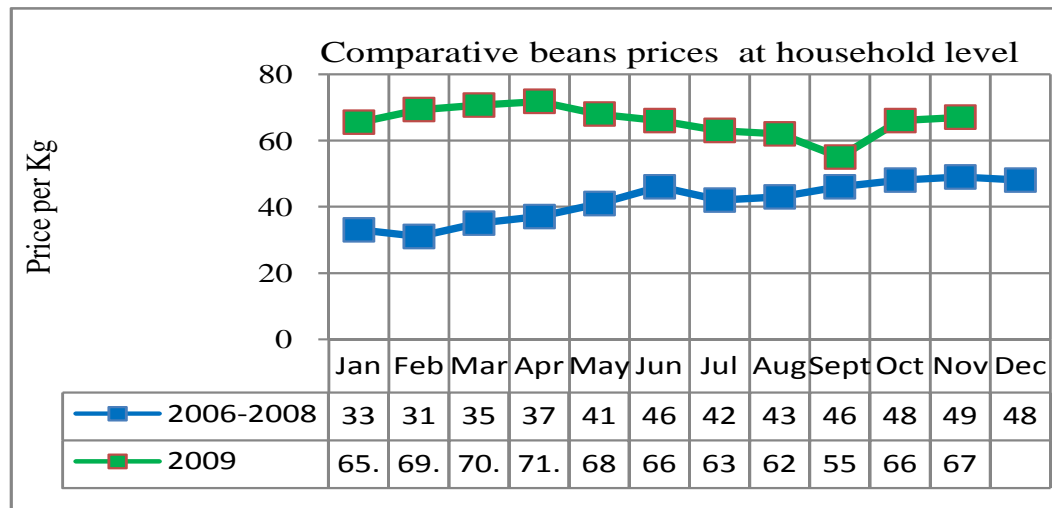


Figure 9 N= 300 households

The average price of beans increased from Ksh66 recorded in the month of October to Ksh67. Like most of the crops, beans prices persistently remained high for the last 12 months regardless of the season. The crop, which is basically outsourced, was available in the local markets though in low amounts. The current prices were abnormally high for the season.

3.2.3 Millet prices

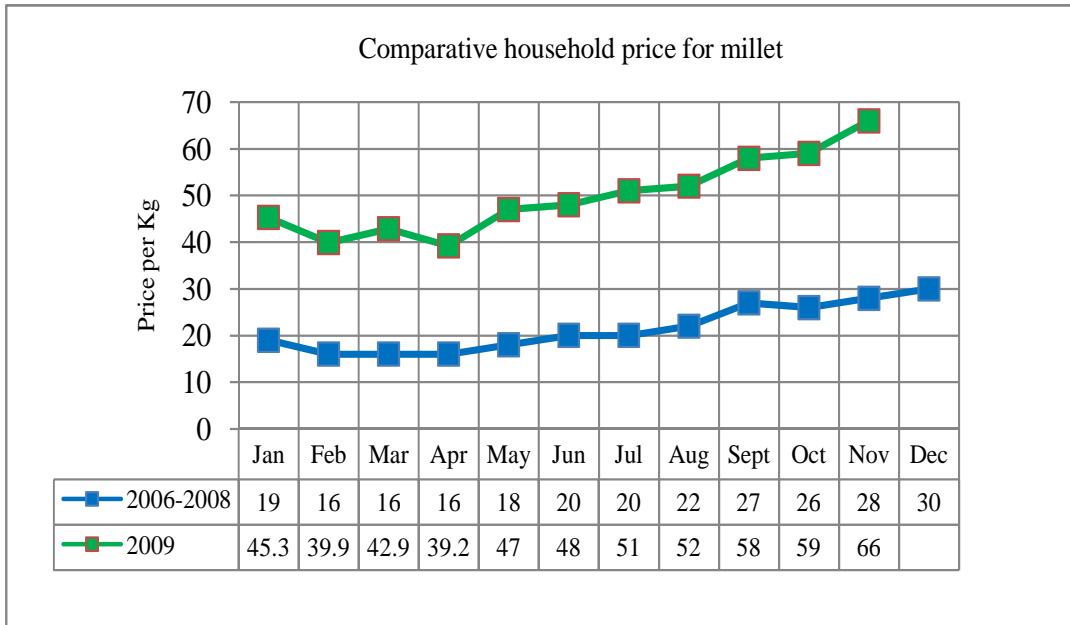


Figure 10 N= 300 households

Similar to all crops, millet prices remained twice as much as normal in the last one year. The crop, which performed very poorly last season, is a key food and at times cash crop particularly in the marginal mixed farming livelihood zone. On average, bullrush millet was sold at Ksh66 per kilo, an increase from Ksh59 recorded last month. The crop is scarcely available in the local markets. This price of this crop that is scarcely available in the local markets, is above seasonal norm.

3.3 Income

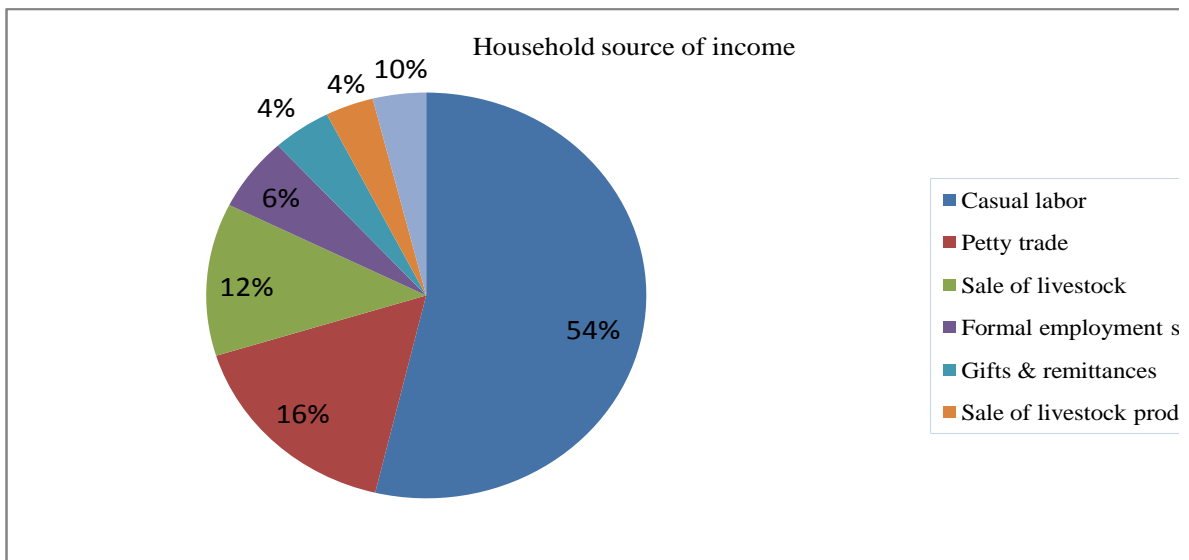


Figure 11 N= 300 households

Households had various sources of income in the month as shown in the chart above. Casual labour contributed the most in household income (54%) while remittances and sale of livestock products put in the least at 4%. Of the 300 households interviewed, no household reported to have had household income from sale of crops, implying food scarcity amongst households.

4.0 Human welfare indicators (Utilization of food)

4.1 Nutrition status

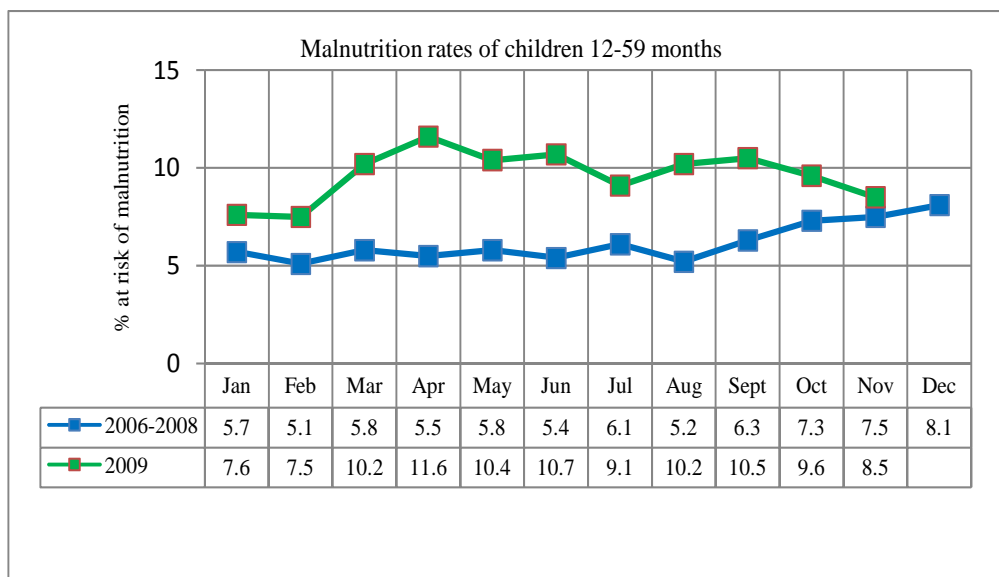


Figure 12 N= 1036 children

There was a notable improvement in the nutrition status among children aged 12-59 months. As the chart above indicates, rates of malnutrition among the age category decreased from 9.6% recorded in October to 8.5% in the month. The observation is normal and could be attributed to improved milk production after the rains. Out of 1,036 children assessed, 8.5% of them were found to be at risk of malnutrition (MUAC <135mm). This tabulates to 88 children. The observation is normal for this time of the year.

4.2 Human health

Human health remained normal all month round, with no disease outbreaks reported. Prevalence of malaria increased though. This is normal in the rainy season.

5.0 Current interventions

- Protracted relief and recovery operation by WFP through the lead agency in Tharaka north and Tharaka south districts.
- Gok relief food was also distributed to target beneficiaries in Tharaka north and Tharaka south districts.
- The government has provided twenty one plastic water storage tanks (10,000 lts) as a drought mitigation measure in Tharaka districts. The ministry of water has ordered for nine tanks of similar capacity for the two districts.

- Malaria campaign by the ministry of health. Bed nets were issued to children and mothers, the most vulnerable category.

5.1 Coping strategies

In the month, households applied various coping strategies (index 1-10) to address daily food needs. These include; - purchase of food on credit, consumption of less preferred food, borrowing of food from relatives and friends, begging and reduction of meal size.

6.0 Recommendations to DSG

- The ongoing rains have hampered transport and communication by cutting off parts of the roads in Tharaka districts as well as in the neighboring districts. Sections of roads such as the Marimanti-Mitunguu road, Mati road and Kamarandi-Kamanyaki road have been adversely affected by the rains and need repairs. *Action: DSG.*